

A PHENOMENAL SEWER AND CREATOR, BRISBANE'S JANE MILBURN IS JOINING SMART FARMER WITH OUR NEW REGULAR COLUMN STICH IN TIME. WITH HER VAST EXPERIENCE BOTH SEWING AND CRAFTING, AND DEEP-SEATED PASSION FOR RURAL QUEENSLAND, IN EACH ISSUE JANE WILL PROVIDE HER THOUGHTS ON NURTURING OUR CREATIVE SIDES, AS WELL AS PROVIDING STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS TO SIMPLE PROJECTS. READ ON TO GET TO KNOW OUR NEWEST MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

Soul stitching

By ALISON FRANCIS

GROWING up in a farming family in New Zealand – where clothes were home-made, food was home-grown and natural resources were at the forefront – gave Jane Milburn a liking for the simple life. The lifestyle encouraged her to develop TextileBeat in 2013, which is about inspiring the upcycling and recycling of natural fibres, fabric and textured objects, and following the heart on a creative journey by working with integrity, creativity and purpose. The two feature items in Jane's range of hand-crafted wares include the History Skirt and Garment Surgery. Garment Surgery involves trawling through op-shops for discarded treasures and refashioning them into wearable creations. "I use mostly natural fibres, but it could be shells or beads – anything really that has come from nature," Jane said. "When I started

going to op-shops again about two years ago, I realised there was a lot of great stuff out there – silks, wools and linens – all just sitting there discarded. So much amazing material was just going to waste."

Having studied agricultural science at the University of Queensland, worked as a rural reporter, been judged 2010 Queensland runner-up in the RIRDC Rural Women's Award, sponsored through the Australian Rural Leaders Foundation and represented the Rural Press Club for more than eight years, Jane is a fervent devotee to rural industry – which is seamlessly stitched into the TextileBeat ethos.

"Country people are very authentic and genuine. Rural Queensland has been the focus of my career, and I believe it has so much to offer," she said.

Inspired by the paddock to plate mantra that has evolved in the food realm, TextileBeat aims to demonstrate the lifecycle of natural fibres.

"For me this provides the opportunity of honouring and preserving natural fibres in a novel way, and I think this will also connect urban people with the product off the land."

In our fast-paced modern society, Jane believes it is important that we are living a holistic lifestyle – eating well and exercising – but also nurturing our creative souls. "I was lucky that my mother sewed a lot of our clothes when I was a kid, and so I learned those skills. So many people have never learnt how to sew, fix and modify. It is such a forgotten art that truly is so therapeutic."

She believes people are lulled into the myth that buying newer, better things will bring us happiness. "People have become even more consumerist, insistent on going out and buying new, thinking it will make them feel better," she said.

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THREADS IN TIME

HISTORY Skirts are skirts with a story to tell. They capture memories and are a way of valuing and reusing special garments and treasure. They are a concept originally created as a way of upcycling natural-fibre garments from their wardrobes, friends' cast-offs and harvested from opportunity shops in Queensland, NSW, Tasmania and New Zealand. Natural fibres – silk, wool, linen, cotton, bamboo – have a look and a feel that is impossible to fake. Vintage buttons, beads, lace and ribbons also provide texture and embellishment in a rich tapestry that makes a unique statement about a person.

IMAGES (clockwise from above):

- The talented Jane Milburn, TextileBeat, Brisbane, will join the *Smart Farmer* family next issue.
- History Skirts and History Cushions are a way of respecting the previous life of the garments and fibres that go into these creations.
- Jane never tires of the intricate design and construction involved in producing a History Skirt.
- The home-spun philosophy centres on the mountain of textile cast-offs which is growing by the year as our consumer society chases bigger, brighter, newer – rather than utilising and valuing the resources they represent.

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